

FALL 2019

# MeadowBrook

The Cutting Edge

INSIDE: Art in the Elements | Little Houses | Racing the River



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**ON THE COVER:** Selection of brass, ivory and silver letter openers from the Matilda and Alfred Wilson collection, dating c. 1910-1940. The Dodge and Wilson families collected letter openers from places they visited, designers they admired and as gifts from friends. Of particular note is the sword-shaped implement at the bottom: Alfred Wilson received this opener when he attended the 40th National Triennial Conclave of the Knights Templar in Miami in 1937. Engraved with his name, the miniature copy of a ceremonial sword was likely a gift, as Alfred was a high-ranking member of the Masonic Society.



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In this MEADOW BROOK MAGAZINE interview, housekeeper Shaina Browning shares stories of her early morning work behind the ropes...and her archaeological digs an ocean and a sea away.

# Meadow Brook

MAGAZINE

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**MEADOW BROOK**  
ONE OF AMERICA'S GREATEST  
ESTATE HOMES, AN ICON OF THE  
AUTOMOTIVE ARISTOCRACY, AND  
A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

The former home of Alfred and Matilda Dodge Wilson, founders of Oakland University, Meadow Brook Hall is located on Oakland's 1,400-acre campus. The self-supporting auxiliary of the university serves as an internationally renowned historic house museum and cultural center.

## Editor's Column

# Joining the cause

In the inaugural issue of the MEADOW BROOK MAGAZINE (Fall 2010), we ran an article on our new membership program. On pages 10 and 11 in this issue, you will find another article on membership, this one detailing a revamped program.

While the two programs have much in common, much has changed over the past nine years. Thanks to the work of a creative staff, tireless volunteers and generous supporters, Meadow Brook has come a long way in its reach and educational contributions to the community and visitors from afar. To name just two milestones, The Hall became a National Historic Landmark in 2012 and was seen in all its glory over three episodes of PBS's *Antiques Roadshow* earlier this year...viewed by five million people each of the three weeks.

Programming has become much richer and robust, as you can see in this issue alone – from servants' life tours a la *Downton Abbey* to a new “Art in the Elements” indoor and outdoor touring experience; from a growing community events slate to an ever-changing and more family focused Holiday Walk, in its 48th year. And, more is in the works, including a developing family activity area in the playhouse district, a planned welcome center and orientation museum in the estate garages and, down the “road,” even an expanded Dodge Brothers interpretive experience.

So, there is clearly much to belong to, as you consider the new, more clearly defined membership levels and spreading the word to family and friends about the benefits of joining our ranks. But, more than what you might get, is what you will be giving.

William Arthur Ward's words challenge all of us – whether through our association with Meadow Brook or in other aspects of our lives – to get in the game. And, by participating and giving of our time and talent and even treasure, the personal benefits of belonging to a group will naturally grow and the impact of the group will strengthen.

I hope you enjoy this issue, which reflects the breadth and depth of what you can learn through the Meadow Brook experience; and that you consider becoming a member, if you are not already, of an incredible group of engaging and passionate people who champion a noble cause.



**“DO MORE THAN BELONG: PARTICIPATE.**

**DO MORE THAN CARE: HELP.**

**DO MORE THAN BELIEVE: PRACTICE.**

**DO MORE THAN BE FAIR: BE KIND.**

**DO MORE THAN FORGIVE: FORGET.**

**DO MORE THAN DREAM: WORK.”**

– William Arthur Ward



# 5 Reasons Why YOU Should Give the Gift of Meadow Brook Membership this Holiday Season



- ★ Free tours all year long, including Holiday Walk, Behind-the-Scenes and Estate Grounds
- ★ Discounts in the one-of-a-kind Museum Store and discounts on community events such as Mystery Dinners; Summer Concert Series; Beats, Brats & Brews; Yoga in the Garden; Breakfast with Santa and much more!
- ★ Subscription to the bi-annual MEADOW BROOK MAGAZINE
- ★ Reciprocal admission to over 1,000 museums nationwide
- ★ Membership supports the preservation of this National Historic Landmark

To purchase your gift membership, call Lauren at (248) 364-6264.

[www.meadowbrookhall.org](http://www.meadowbrookhall.org)



# holiday walk happenings

## Landmark in Lights

November 29-December 23

It's the most wonderful time of year and Meadow Brook Hall's 48th Holiday Walk will bring the magic of the holidays alive in a dazzling series of activities and events. Enjoy The Hall's favorite tradition and explore new yuletide events that feature magnificent trimmings, more than 50 trees, and lights galore.

### ADMISSION

(November 29-December 20)

#### ADULTS/SENIORS

\$20 per person

(Free for MBH Members!)

#### CHILDREN (AGES 6-12)

\$7.50 per person

#### CHILDREN (5 & UNDER)

Free

#### MILITARY WITH ID

\$15

*Reservations are not required.*



### HOLIDAY WALK SELF-GUIDED TOURS

Experience a tradition that is decades in the making with self-guided touring through Meadow Brook Hall decorated in holiday splendor. Featuring more than 50 magnificent trees on display – including a 10-foot tall Poinsettia tree

created by 150 live plants – visitors can visit during the day or see all the lights during extended evening hours. Be sure to visit our Holiday Shop for unique gifts for everyone on your list.

**November 29 through December 23, 2019**

Self-guided Holiday Walk tours are offered daily from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and until 8 p.m. on select nights. *Last admittance is one hour prior to closing.*



### SENIOR DAYS

Seniors 62 and older can enjoy \$5 off their holiday tour admission on Mondays and Wednesdays throughout the Holiday Walk.

### LATE NIGHT TOURS

There is nothing quite like the warm glow of holiday lights on a snowy evening. **On Monday, Dec. 16 and Wednesday, Dec. 18 through Monday, Dec. 23,** The Hall will be open from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. so guests can enjoy a special night of holiday revelry beginning at 5 p.m. Warm up with hot cocoa or a holiday-inspired adult beverage.

### STARLIGHT STROLL

**Thursday, Dec. 5 | 7-10 p.m.**

With a four-course strolling dinner with chef-attended food stations, full signature bar, live musical entertainment and dancing, the Starlight Stroll makes for the one of the most elegant experiences of the season. Tickets are \$100 and reservations are required. Hurry! This event often sells out.

### CANDLELIGHT TOURS

**Sunday Dec. 1, 8, 15 | 7-9 p.m.**

The Hall glitters anew by candlelight and firelight. Guests will see the splendor of years gone by during this special guided tour, which includes a champagne afterglow in the Ballroom. Tickets are \$40 and reservations are required.



[meadowbrookhall.org](http://meadowbrookhall.org) @meadowbrookhall

## CELEBRATE THE SEASON OF SANTA

Santa Claus will bring good cheer to girls and boys at two special events:

### HOLIDAY MAGIC WITH SANTA

**Sunday, Dec. 8 | 4-6 p.m.**

Make new holiday memories at Meadow Brook with a special visit with Santa, a live magic show, holiday treat, craft and more. Reservations are \$20 per person ages 3 and up. Children 2 and under are free. This memorable occasion includes self-guided touring of The Hall.

### SUPPER WITH SANTA

**Sunday, Dec. 15 | 4-7 p.m.**

Bring your Christmas list to the best holiday party of all—with Santa as the guest of honor. Enjoy supper, a holiday craft and a self-guided tour of The Hall. Reservations are \$45 per adult and \$40 for children 3-13. Children 2 and under with a meal are \$25 and without a meal are free.

### DECEMBER 21-23

#### Final Weekend Family Festivities 12-8 p.m.

No holiday season is complete without a visit to Santa! This year, Santa Claus will make a magical stop at Meadow Brook with two of his reindeer to meet the young and young at heart. Share your holiday wishes in his workshop and pay a visit to the reindeer.

Warm up during the last weekend of Holiday Walk with Bonfire Evenings. From 5-8 p.m., it will be the perfect time to snuggle up and enjoy the final winter evenings of the season with hot cocoa and holiday-inspired adult beverages.



#### ADMISSION for the final weekend festivities

(December 21-23)

**ADULTS/SENIORS** \$22.50 per person  
(Free for MBH Members!)

**CHILDREN (AGES 6-12)** \$10 per person

**CHILDREN (5 & UNDER)** Free

**MILITARY WITH ID** \$17.50

*Reservations are not required.*

For more information on the 2019 Holiday Walk | Landmark in Lights, please visit our website [meadowbrookhall.org](http://meadowbrookhall.org) or call (248) 364-6252. Happy Holidays!



participants, tea and scones and glimpses of the servants' sitting room, maids' quarters, kitchen and more. During the late 1920s and '30s, the Dodge-Wilson family employed a staff of 25-30 individuals in the house alone, and many more worked on the estate.

"A Servant's Life" tour will be available again on select weekends in February 2020. Visit [www.meadowbrookhall.com](http://www.meadowbrookhall.com) for dates and information.

## The real deal

As the new Downton Abbey film invites viewers to step back into the turn of the 20th-Century world of Lady Mary, Carson and Mrs. Patmore, so too does Meadow Brook Hall invite guests to explore the downstairs lives of Mary Mathews, Beatrice Whitaker and Violet McDermott—the real people who ran Meadow Brook in its prime (*top*).

"A Servant's Life" is a special immersion tour at The Hall that provides a chance to see life as it was lived at Michigan's own Downton Abbey, when the head housekeeper invites visitors to be part of the staff. Guests learn how the servants lived and worked at The Hall in this behind-the-scenes experiential tour that features costumed



## Masonry moments

This summer's Masonry Restoration Project focused on two stone balustrades, rebuilding a brick parapet wall, reconstructing a stone cheek wall and cleaning The Hall's ornate entrance stonework.

The \$200,000 project, funded by the Matilda R. Wilson Fund, addressed the building's most critical masonry repair needs. Ann Arbor preservation architects Hopkins & Burns Design provided project oversight, while construction was performed by D.C. Byers of Detroit, who faced the challenging task of completing the work in a short window of just two months, while avoiding any major disruption to The Hall's full schedule of weddings.

Aside from the clean look of stonework that had blackened The Hall's facade, and the no-longer-leaning cheek wall, most of the completed work is barely visible to the layman's eyes – the mark of a successful restoration project.

## Dancing under the stars

At one of this summer's music series concerts, popular jazz performer Kimmie Horne (*below, middle*) recognized two special couples on the dance floor.

Joe and Daureen Pisano (*left*) from Gladwin, were celebrating 50 years of marriage. They have attended concerts in previous years ("We didn't want to miss Kimmie this year!"), as well as the Hitchcock movie series and house tours. They have been dancing together since they met at Stratford High School in Connecticut.

The two "youngsters" celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary, Edward and Nikki Brown from Macomb (*right*), gave the Pisanos a run for their money on the dance floor.

"Edward has been a romantic husband for our entire marriage," Nikki said, "including overnight impromptu getaways at historic locations. This was our first time to the remarkable grounds and epic home of the Dodge-Wilson family, which Edward heard about through Facebook."



PHOTO COURTESY OF ZIGMUND URBANSKI

## Meadow Brook welcomes new team members

As The Hall continues to grow and further its reputation as a cultural institution and venue, we have expanded our team with two new staff members.

For the last two years, Jill Moran has spearheaded the development, planning and execution of our vibrant community events programs. Her work has been so successful that she has transformed the part-time role into the full-time Community Events Manager position. Her creativity, attention to detail and cheerful personality make her the perfect fit to host a wonderful collection of events.

Katie Higgins has also joined the team as the Marketing and Communications Manager. In this newly created role, she will support external relations initiatives including media relations, marketing, social media, digital communications and more. Her background includes public relations for a diverse portfolio of clients, along with experience at OU's communications and marketing department.

Please join us in welcoming Jill and Katie to the Meadow Brook community!



*Jill Moran*



*Katie Higgins*

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

### Gold Castle winners

This August three amazing volunteers were awarded their Gold Castles, honoring 20 years of service at The Great Estate. Rich and Jan Caloia divide their time between helping out in curatorial, hosting for weddings and events, and working in the museum shop. "We firmly believe in preserving history and especially enjoy being a part of The Hall's future growth and finding the many small ways volunteers like us can make a difference," Jan said.

Volunteer Carol Herbst donates her time by helping to make sure Meadow Brook Hall's gardens are



spectacular. "I am grateful for the opportunity I've had to spend many pleasant (and some challenging) hours in the Meadow Brook Hall gardens. When I joined the garden club in 1999, I never thought I would still be gardening 20 years later."



In case you are thinking of joining this elite group here's the math: 20 years of volunteering at 50 hours (at least) a year, equals 1,000 hours, or 125 eight-hour days – a generous gift of time.



### Barb Thorpe Award

She works in the heat, cold and rain or shine. She has a knack for organization and a love of spreadsheets. And, according to those who know her best, she is always willing to jump in and help with a smile, a joke and a little bit of sass. These words describe Connie Yeo, who received the 2018 Barb Thorpe Volunteer Memorial Award. "I was really surprised and shocked," Connie admits. "When jobs needed to be done, I just stepped up."

The award is given by staff annually to a volunteer or couple that not only goes above and beyond the call of duty, but also lives up to the same love and dedication to The Great Estate as exemplified by the late Barbara Thorpe. Over 13 years, Connie's willingness to "step up" has included at least 10 leadership positions with the Garden Club including past president, publicity chair, assistant treasurer, director of gardens, and soon, director of membership. "I just love being a part of something bigger and giving back," Connie stated. "I've made friends, learned a lot, and been able to be part of a wonderful group."

# Be a driving force at Meadow Brook Hall!



1919 Dodge Brothers Wrecker (NEW!)



1938 Packard Limousine

## Up for Adoption

Interested? Contact Curator Madelyn Rzadkowolski by phone at (248) 364-6253; by email at [rzadkowo@oakland.edu](mailto:rzadkowo@oakland.edu); or by U.S. mail at 350 Estate Drive, Rochester, MI 48309. **MB**

Meadow Brook Hall seeks the help of our friends to preserve the historic automobiles in our collection for the upcoming year. Your tax-deductible adoption will help us make necessary repairs, provide preventative maintenance and pay insurance for the historic vehicles in our care, ensuring they are there to inspire, educate and “spark” the imaginations of this and future generations.

## ADOPT-A-DODGE

**DETAILS:** You will adopt the vehicle for a period of one year, beginning November 14, 2019 through November 13, 2020 (November 14 is the anniversary of the day John and Horace Dodge revealed their first car in 1914).

**COST:** \$750 per vehicle per year of adoption

### BENEFITS:

- Recognition of your adoption displayed by the car and on the Meadow Brook website for one year.
- An invitation to a special event to meet the volunteer team that maintains the cars and to receive a driving lesson (one eligible driver per car adoption).
- Opportunity for a photo shoot for you and family members and/or friends with the car.
- Information and updates on how your car was cared for during the year.

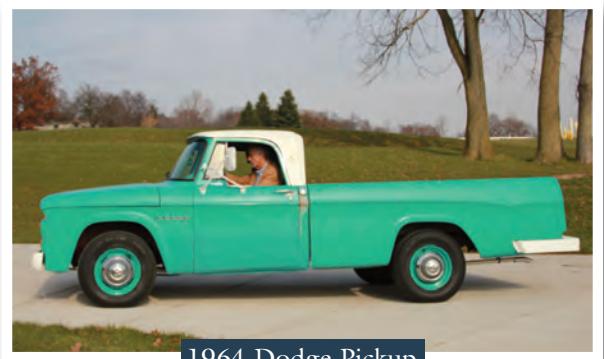


1919 Dodge Brothers Screenside (NEW!)

*Two new vehicles join the fleet this year. The right-hand drive Screenside truck makes for an especially adventurous driving lesson!*



1919 Graham Brothers Truck



1964 Dodge Pickup



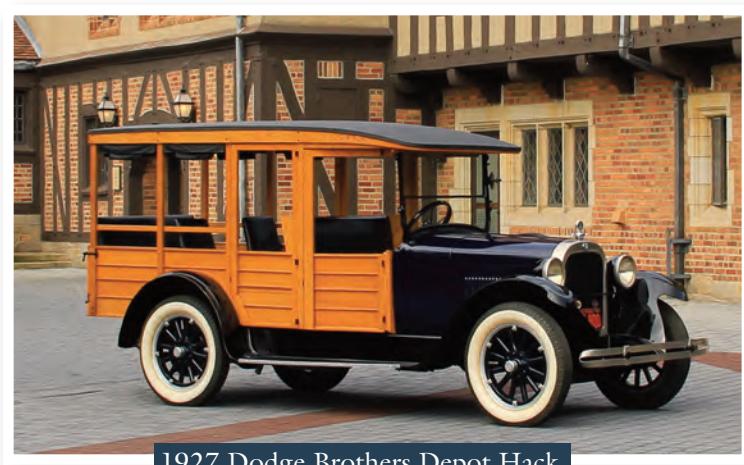
1925 Dodge Brothers Depot Hack



1915 Dodge Brothers Touring Car



1947 Dodge Pickup



1927 Dodge Brothers Depot Hack

# All in the Family

*Meadow Brook Hall Unveils New Membership Program*



**H**olding a unique place in the fabric of metro Detroit, Meadow Brook Hall boasts remarkable architecture, rich community programming and incomparable events. More than this, however, it is living history. A place where real people lived and worked, celebrated milestones and navigated challenges on their way through life's tangled path.

Today, The Hall is a self-supporting museum and cultural center that strives to preserve and interpret its

buildings and grounds through touring, educational experiences and inspiring events. With a newly overhauled membership program, there are more opportunities than ever to enjoy The Hall time and time again.

As a member, you will become part of the Meadow Brook Hall family and invited to enjoy The Great Estate throughout the year, including free tour admission for the House Tour, Behind-the-Scenes Tour, Estate Tour,

and even the beloved Holiday Walk. You will be the first to know about new events and programs and be in the know about all that Meadow Brook Hall has to offer. Most importantly, your membership will help secure the future of an irreplaceable cultural and historic landmark.

The Hall represents a unique place in time—rooted in the past and well-positioned for the present. It takes many people—volunteers, visitors, community leaders, employees and, of course, members—to prepare The Hall for the 21st century and beyond.

Through thoughtful curation and stewardship, Meadow Brook Hall tells stories of the Dodge and Wilson families, stories of America's automotive industrialization, stories of life between two World Wars and the Great Depression, stories of grandeur and luxury. Become a member today and add your family's story to that of The Great Estate.

As a National Historic Landmark, Meadow Brook Hall offers many unique experiences for members both at The Great Estate and at more than 1,000 museums through the North American Reciprocal Museum Association.

Meadow Brook Hall now offers four levels of membership to fit everyone (*opposite page*).

**Become a member today  
to make Meadow Brook part  
of your family's history!**

For more information or to become a member, contact Lauren Guzzardo at (248) 364-6264 or [guzzardo@oakland.edu](mailto:guzzardo@oakland.edu). **MB**



## Benefits of Membership

	INDIVIDUAL 1 Adult	DUO 2 Adults (named)	FAMILY 2 Adults and their children or grandchildren under 18 (named)	AMBASSADOR 2 Adults and up to 4 guests (can vary each visit)
	\$100	\$150	\$200	\$500
<b>Free year-round tour admission*</b> <i>(including Behind-the-Scenes, Estate and Holiday Walk)</i>	★	★	★	★
<b>Discount on select community events and programs</b> <i>(# of tickets per event determined by membership level)</i>	10%	10%	10% <i>(20% on family events**)</i>	15%
<b>Museum Store discount</b>	10%	10%	10%	15%
<b>Early access to purchase tickets for select events/programs</b>	★	★	★	★
<b>Subscription to MEADOW BROOK MAGAZINE</b>	★	★	★	★
<b>MB Estate e-blasts</b>	★	★	★	★
<b>Members Only Appreciation event</b>	★	★	★	★
<b>Exhibition and special event previews</b>	★	★	★	★
<b>Early access (on select days)</b>	★	★	★	★
<b>Guest day pass***</b> <i>(member need not be present)</i>	1	2	2	4
<b>Reserved seating at select events, programs and performances</b>	★	★	★	★
<b>20% discount off tickets at Meadow Brook Theatre****</b>	★	★	★	★
<b>Reciprocal admission to over 1,000 museums nationwide</b> <i>(visit <a href="http://www.narmassociation.org">www.narmassociation.org</a> for list)</i>	★	★	★	★
<b>Private Holiday Walk reception</b>				★
<b>Private tour for 6 with a curatorial staff member</b>				★

\*Some exclusions may apply   \*\*Specific events list by request   \*\*\*Not valid during Holiday Walk   \*\*\*\*Excludes "A Christmas Carol"



# Art in the elements

Floral designers from around the country exhibited one-of-a-kind pieces during “Art in the Elements,” a community event held at Meadow Brook Hall in August that spotlighted both interior spaces of The Hall and the natural trails of the woodlands.

Attended by more than 1,000 visitors, the four-day event was a collaborative effort between Meadow Brook Hall and the American Institute of Floral Designers-North Central Chapter.

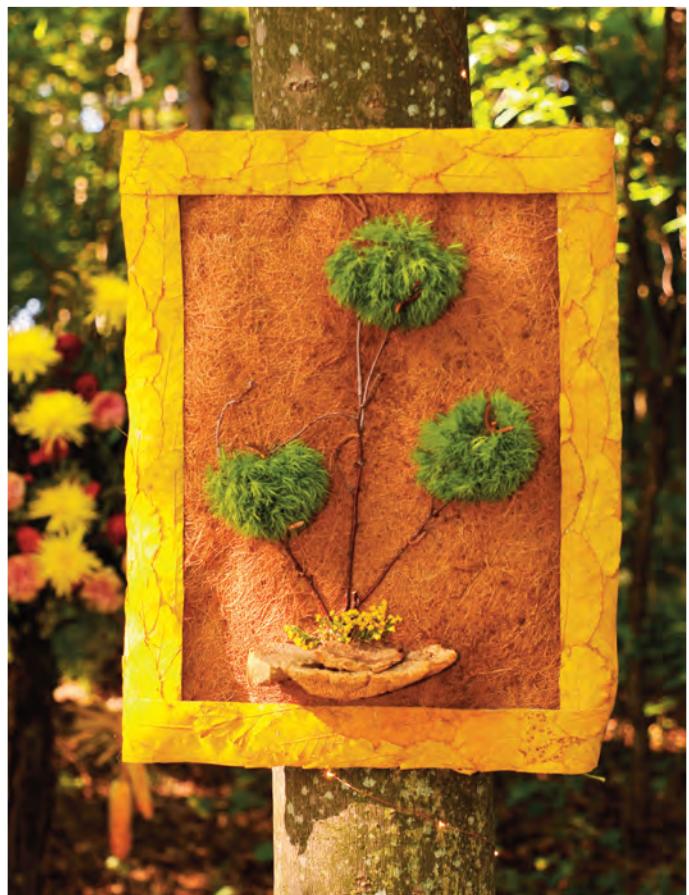
Twenty designers from as far away as New Mexico and California exhibited their large-scale interpretations of “Past, Present and Future,” a theme that celebrated Meadow Brook Hall’s 90th anniversary, in the natural setting of The Hall’s woodlands. Another 12 floral centerpieces were designed and displayed alongside various objects inside The Hall, including paintings, stained glass, statues and costumes.



*Florals designed by Brett Turner (facing page), Alice Waterous (left), and Deborah Strand, (above).*



*Florals designed by Carolyn Minutillo (above), Lana Chernyavsky (top right) and Loann Burke (right).*



Visitors also experienced a floral craft station (for children and adults), plein air painting, and tours of The Hall and the Dodge and Wilson children's playhouses.

Art in the Elements was created by AIFD designer Bob Friese 12 years ago as a scholarship fundraiser for students entering the floral design field and was held at his property in west Michigan.

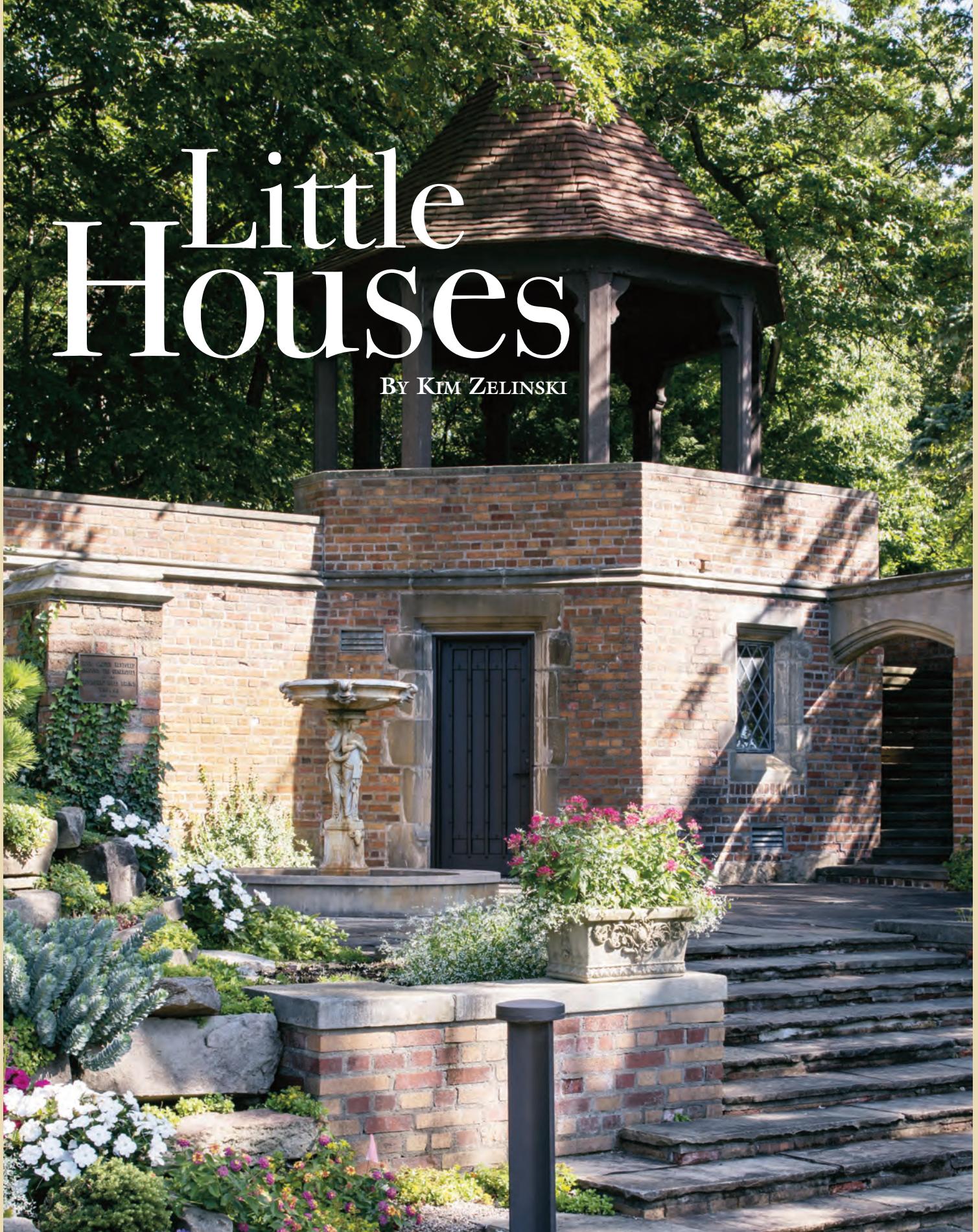
The decision to bring the show to Meadow Brook Hall was a natural fit, according to co-chair Alice Waterous, who noted that, "Between the elegance of the house and the expansive woodlands, this property is an ideal location to highlight our industry's talents. I already have great ideas for next year's event." Waterous also serves as the longtime lead designer for The Hall's annual Holiday Walk. **MB**



*Florals designed by Heather DeLong (top left),  
Pattie Wallander (left) and Laura Daluga (left).*

# Little Houses

BY KIM ZELINSKI



Scattered around the Meadow Brook estate, beyond the imposing structure of Meadow Brook Hall, lie a supporting cast of small and somewhat inconspicuous structures that nonetheless contributed greatly to the functionality and aesthetics of the operation. Most were afterthoughts, their need becoming apparent once the estate began to develop.

Yet, once on the radar, these ancillary structures – including the Tea House, Pump House, Hose House, Watchman’s House and Cleo’s Doghouse – were built with the same attention to detail, and scrutiny that the Wilsons applied to all of their buildings, notably the signature Tudor-style design that came to give the estate its identity.

## Tea House

The typical layout of an early 20th-century country estate included a few standard elements: manor home, formal gardens, stables, bridges, greenhouses and quite often an architectural folly – a picturesque structure that didn’t serve much of a practical purpose, even if it was meant to look like it did. To some extent, the Tea House at Meadow Brook Hall fit this description. While the upper section of the Tea House was designed, though rarely used, as an intimate space for viewing the landscape, the lower level was more practically utilized as a gardening tool room.

Landscape architect Arthur Davidson, in the early days of Meadow Brook Hall’s design, came up with the idea of building a garden wall that would connect to the Library wing in the front courtyard. Its purpose was to both balance the asymmetrical design of the front facade and create a sense of an enclosed courtyard. Davidson also suggested that rather than having the garden wall terminate into a hill or woods, the addition of a terminus, such as a tea house, could add interest and scale. In the landscape master plan Davidson later developed for that area, the Tea House was set up to command expansive views of the formal parterre gardens below.

Blending into the natural slope of the landscape’s hillside, the Tea House (which cost nearly \$7,000 to construct) featured the same materials characteristic of Meadow Brook Hall’s Tudor-style architecture – including brick, stone, wood timbers and a clay-tiled roof.

Although Davidson’s formal gardens surrounding the Tea House were never realized, the structure was at the center of at least two special events the Wilsons hosted: daughter Barbara Wilson’s debutante party in 1950 and an elaborate ladies tea Matilda Wilson held in the 1940s for her special guest, Madame Chiang Kai-shek, the First Lady of the Republic of China.



*Tea House, circa 1945.*

# Pump House

Self-sufficiency was not only a popular pursuit of country estate owners in the early 20th Century, it was also a necessity given that the properties were often located a good distance away from city amenities. However, these wealthy landowners also had the means to incorporate the finest, state-of-the-art systems available at the time.

The first system upgrade that made its way to Meadow Brook Farms was a new well/pumping station installed by John Dodge soon after purchasing the property in 1908. Years later, as the Wilsons developed the estate, adding numerous buildings and operations, four more well/pumping stations were built, two of which were located near Meadow Brook Hall itself.

The first, Well #1, is located in an underground room accessed from the Family Garage. This pump filled one of the two 10,000-gallon tanks located in the room. While that tank supplied water to the house, the second 10,000-gallon tank was filled from Well #2, a pumping station located near Knole Cottage. The second tank supplied water to the irrigation system.

The 140-square-foot brick Well #2 near Knole Cottage included leaded-glass windows and double doors, originally adorned with Tiffany insets that were repurposed from the Grosse Pointe house John and Matilda Dodge were building before John's death in 1920.

Located 18 feet below ground level is the well pump, a sump pump and blower. Although the system is still operable, The Hall temporarily stopped using the well last year when a costly pipe leak was discovered under The Hall's granite driveway.



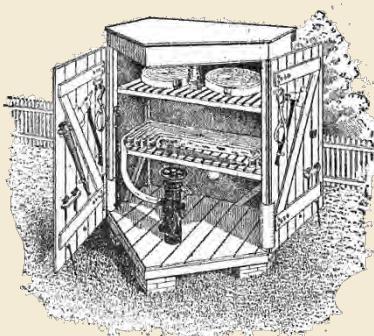
# Hose House

Along the drive leading to Knole Cottage, a small brick structure is often mistaken for a dog house. A closer look behind the latched wooden door reveals its real purpose – a hose house.

In 1926, fire protection for the emerging Meadow Brook Hall was broached in the Builders Risk Fire Insurance policy carried by The Hall's general contractor, Bryant Detwiller (paid for by the Wilsons). The underwriters instructed Detwiller to construct a "mill yard hose house" as specified in the National Board of Fire Underwriters manual. Bryant Detwiller issued the field order for its construction, however Alfred and Matilda Wilson objected to the insurance company's edict, explaining that they "could carry their own risk and not go to the expense of fire protection to obtain a low rate of insurance." Although the Wilsons assumed that their instructions to halt work was carried out, the materials had already been purchased and delivered and it fell on the construction superintendent to convince them to move forward.

Eventually, several hose houses would be installed on the Meadow Brook Farms estate. Of the two constructed near Meadow Brook Hall proper, only the Knole Cottage Hose House still exists.

Hose houses, especially on country estates, contributed greatly to the ability to efficiently get water to a potential fire that would otherwise be delayed by hauling hoses and equipment from a long distance. Both of Meadow Brook Hall's hose houses were constructed within the recommended specifications, including a brick pier foundation, adequate ventilation and doors that swung open with proper clearance. The equipment included a standard hydrant with hose gate, a hose reel that stored a 200-foot cotton rubber lined hose sectioned in 50 foot lengths, a 100-foot extra hose, and all the necessary tools for operating, including wrenches, couplings, axes and a heavy mill lantern.



# Watchman's House

It had always been the plan that once the construction of Meadow Brook Hall was nearing completion, Frances Dodge's playhouse (Knole Cottage), originally built near the Dodge farmhouse, would be relocated to a new site closer to The Hall. Soon after the 1928-29 move, the security-conscious Matilda and Alfred Wilson had a small structure built as a watchman's station for then 13-year-old Frances.

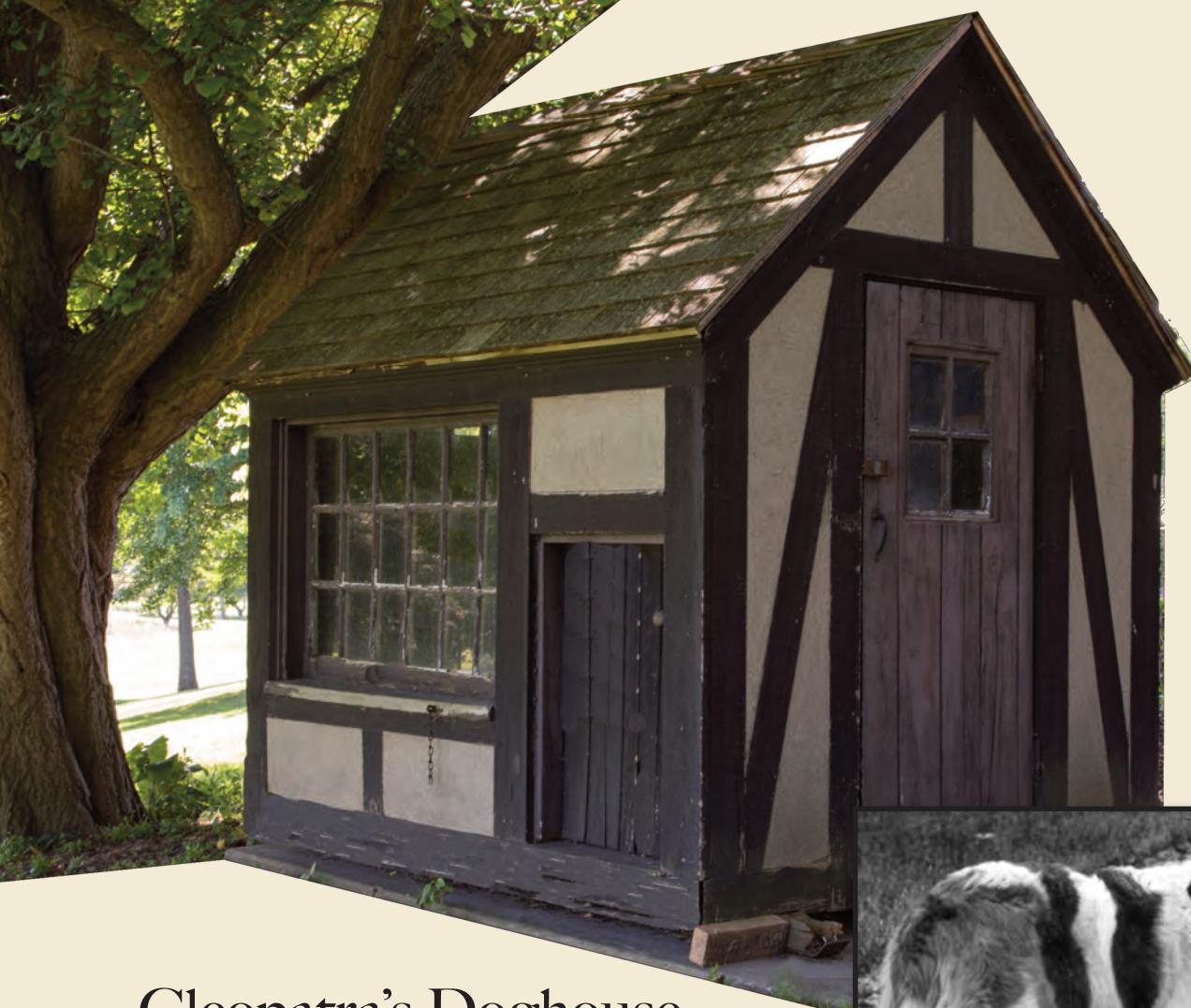
Family security, particularly for the wealthy, was a major concern. For most of the Dodge children's years, they were looked after by nurses, governesses and very often a watchman, particularly on the Meadow Brook Farms estate. Longtime Dodge Brothers employee Tom Compton served in this capacity when the children were young, and as the estate grew, additional staff and security stations were added.

The detail of the Watchman's House complements the charm of Knole Cottage, particularly its Tudor-style design with gabled roof, half-timbers and stucco facade. While its size seems somewhat small for an adult watchman, it was appropriately built to match the three-quarter scale of Knole Cottage.

The Watchman's House eventually outgrew its purpose. Frances moved away, Barbara Wilson had her own playhouse and it was only on rare occasions that Matilda would open the cottage to visiting guests. On a 1954 map of the Meadow Brook estate, the Watchman's House is labeled "tool shed," which is coincidentally how the Meadow Brook Hall Club uses it today.

*Above right,  
Meadow Brook Hall  
watchman, circa  
1935.*





## Cleopatra's Doghouse

Throughout the years, the Wilsons owned a large number of canines, serving a variety of uses. Some were watchdogs assigned to various farm operations, some, such as the Pekingese, were bred for sale, and a good number of them were simply companions to the Dodge and Wilson family. Some of the dogs had their own housing, including a large, gentle Saint Bernard named Cleopatra, Cleo for short.

Cleo's Kennel, while not nearly as elaborate as the extensive kennels constructed for France Dodge's Pekingese dogs, was nonetheless constructed exclusively for her. Cleo was a special pet to family, staff and her favorite chum, Goldie, the golden cocker spaniel belonging to Richard Wilson.

Matilda Wilson managed the assortment of dogs on the estate in her inimitable style – schedules, staff assignments and rules. The overall responsibility fell to Ruby Watson, the resident kennel manager. Ruby either prepared the animals' food or saw to it that food was provided to each dog. Cleo was the Houseman's charge. He made sure the dog had her 30-minute feeding of food and biscuits, refreshed her water daily, assured her containers and dishes were cleaned and personally washed and brushed her.

Constructed around 1941, the kennel, which included Cleo's house, was originally located near the Visitors Garage just east of the Maids' Garden. Its design followed optimal kennel requirements: well ventilated, free from drafts, plenty of sunshine and shade and an ample yard for romping about.

Cleo's Doghouse, measuring at 6 feet by 8 feet and just shy of 5 feet tall, was designed with a human-sized door, a smaller dog-sized door and both a small window and a large glass window imbedded with chicken wire (for safety) that could be propped opened for ventilation.

At today's Meadow Brook Estate, Cleo's Doghouse is located on east side of the Rose Garden, but is slated to be moved to an area near the children's playhouses – Knole Cottage, Dan's Cabin and the recently moved Wilson Playhouse. Here, it can be better viewed by, and interpreted for, the public. **MB**



*Cleopatra, circa 1945*

# Racing the River

BY MADELYN RZADKOWLSKI



Horace Dodge, Jr.'s interest in manufacturing speedboats was motivated by his pursuit of boat-racing victories, an interest shared by his sister Delphine, one of the first women to make waves in the sport.

**The Horace Dodge family** boasted a few seemingly disconnected traits: devotion to music and art, a mechanical aptitude, interest in boating, talent in the equestrian sphere. But the common ground that brought fame to Horace Dodge, Sr. and his two children, Delphine and Horace, Jr., was their passion for racing.

In his early years, a cyclist who performed both as racer and referee in regional bicycle races, Horace, Sr. later took his skills to the water. In summer, racing his boats and cruisers and in winter competing with his “ice yachts” – a type of sled with a sail which would skim over the frozen Detroit River – Horace exposed his children to all aspects of racing.

From the brainstorming and experimenting with those helping to design, build or race their boats...to the respectful camaraderie with their equally fledgling competitors...to the actual adrenaline rush of the race, Horace embraced the sport. After their father died in 1920, it would not be long before both children were also hooked.

Horace, Jr. was the first to enter the field, inspired by local legend Gar Wood, a man who not only raced boats but also built and sold custom crafts to his wealthy peers. Though Horace, Jr. idolized Wood, he looked to his father’s success in the auto industry for inspiration for his own speedboat manufactory; like his father, building them of good quality on a production scale so they would be more accessible to the general public. Manufacturing his own pleasure crafts also gave him the factory space, tools and designers necessary to build his own racing boats, with plenty of space

*Opposite page, top: Horace E. Dodge at the wheel of a Dodge runabout, Miami Races, Florida, 1924 © Mystic Seaport Museum, Rosenfeld Collection, 1984. Below: Delphine Dodge Cromwell preparing to race, c. 1925. Courtesy of Ken Ranger.*

for experimentation. Anyone with money could purchase a racing boat, but only those with the genius to customize them stood a chance of winning races.

As early as 1921, Horace, Jr. started to work on the floor of the Dodge Brothers automobile factory so he could learn the ins and outs of the manufacturing business. This experience would prove invaluable for the 21-year-old, not because he would take over at Dodge, but because the seed was planted that he could combine his love for boating with a career. Explaining to news reporters that he used to ride his bicycle through the factory as a child, he said, “I am beginning to find that you can carry your play right into your work and get even more enjoyment out of it than you did before. You not only continue to gratify your personal interest, but you accomplish something constructive at the same time.”

Horace, Jr. began receiving passing mentions for being in boat races in 1922, but he was still learning the sport. In February, 1923 he was a charter member of the new “Regatta Club” (with members such as Gar Wood and Edsel Ford), whose purpose was to “standardize motor boat racing, starting and timing mechanisms, and other matters that pertain to power boat competition.” The following September he entered *Musketeer I* and *Musketeer II* in the Gold Cup race in Detroit [ed: one would assume he had planned on a Musketeer III but it was either unfinished or had not passed muster when testing].

*Musketeer I* – which experienced an accident during the trials and never



*Top: Delphine Dodge at Gold Cup races at Long Island, 1926. © Mystic Seaport Museum, Rosenfeld Collection, 1984.187.20577F. Below: Delphine made news for being the first woman to drive in the Gold Cup races, piloting her boat Nuisance. Salem News, Salem, Ohio, August 26, 1926.*



*The only woman entered in the Dodge Gold Cup Regatta, held off Port Washington, L. I., is Mrs. Delphine Dodge Cromwell, daughter of the late Horace E. Dodge. She is seen at the wheel of her speedy entry, "Nuisance."*



*Left: Delphine receives the President's Cup trophy from President Calvin Coolidge on the lawn of the White House, 1927. Courtesy of Ken Ranger.*  
*Above: The President's Cup Regatta was an annual race on the Potomac River, 1926. Courtesy of Library of Congress.*

raced (a common occurrence no matter the skill level of the driver) – received much attention for its unusual construction. The motor was at the stern of the boat, leaving the mechanic and pilot to sit in front of it, and causing a “galloping” ride across the waves. Unfortunately, the waves won and the stern of the boat sank.

But Horace was getting noticed for thinking outside the box. At the 1924 Gold Cup race trial, again in Detroit, Horace saved the pilot of Edsel Ford’s boat, *Woodfish*, when an accident caused it to sink completely into the river. Horace’s entry, *Baby Delphine III*, named for his young daughter, was matched in the 150-mile race

against boats owned by Gar Wood and L. Gordon Hammersley of New York. Though those boats finished with a two-second margin, Horace’s boats had shown well, and he had finally come into his own in the racing world.

Horace’s older sister, Delphine, and her husband James R. Cromwell, became interested in serving as pilots for the many boats Horace would put into competition. On December 10, 1924, Delphine announced she would be the first woman to own a boat or drive in the Gold Cup, the ultimate competition in speedboat racing, to be held in Manhasset Bay (in New York’s Long Island Sound) the next

August. Her brother would be helping her build a boat, to be delivered several weeks ahead so she could practice the course. She planned to race for the Columbia Yacht Club of New York. In the end, Delphine selected another to drive the boat, the *Nuisance*: Col. J. G. Vincent of Detroit. Vincent set a record at 49 mph. In the Detroit Yacht Club Challenge, the *Nuisance* also beat *Solar Plexus*, the boat driven by her brother, by a lap and two lengths for the winning trophy.

Horace was well-prepared for the 1926 Gold Cup off Long Island, and his journey out east illustrates how difficult racing was in that era. Two

of his boats, *Water Detroit* and *Baby Water Car*, were completed at the last minute and shipped by rail to join his three others, which were already in New York. Horace and 30 men from his team (mechanics, ignition experts and pilots) made the arduous 18-hour train ride, with the boats in freight behind them. The five boats had been designed by George Crouch, who also was instrumental in Horace's Dodge Watercar Company (see the Fall 2018 MEADOW BROOK MAGAZINE). Horace sent his yacht, *Delphine*, ahead to New York with 1,500 gallons of high-test gasoline to be used during the races. Not leaving anything to chance, he also sent two trucks with 400 gallons each.

Once the races began, *Delphine* satisfied the public's curiosity by taking the steering wheel and driving *Nuisance* herself, becoming the first woman to drive. In the third heat, she was unable to get the motor running when the starting flag dropped, but then made up the difference by overtaking Horace in his *Impshi* in the sixth lap. The race was full of trial and excitement, though, and accidents led to only three of the boats finishing the race, not including any of the Dodge family's.

In 1927, just her second year of racing, *Delphine* drove *Miss Syndicate* to victory in the President's Cup Regatta, held on September 17. President Calvin Coolidge watched the races on the Potomac River from his yacht, *Mayflower*, as Navy planes looped and twirled overhead and an Army blimp floated over the scene. When Coolidge presented *Delphine* her trophy on the White House lawn, newspapers gleefully reported the woman "sports star" had "reached the heights which older and more experienced men drivers have spent years and several fortunes trying to attain."

Winning the coveted President's Cup was no fluke, as she had also won the 90-mile race for the Dodge trophy earlier that day, a race begun by her brother years before to honor their



*Delphine with mechanic Bill Haney in Delphine VII, 1933. Courtesy of Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, VMC78065.*

father. *Miss Syndicate* had also won the 150-mile Detroit Sweepstakes, the longest speedboat race of the year, on September 5, but with Horace at the wheel.

*Delphine* explained her skills and reconciled her feminine interest in racing by saying: "I have tried many sports but for crowding thrills of a lifetime into one minute, for the meeting of unexpected hazards with quick and accurate thinking, I know of no sport equal to motorboat racing... A woman does not for a minute have to give up her femininity to be a motorboat driver. A psychologist might discover that the quickness of a woman's mind makes her even more suitable for the handling of a roaring, flashing motorboat dashing through the water at 60 or 70 mph than a man."

Over the next few years, Horace and *Delphine* continued racing and building boats, as well as handling their growing families. In August,



*Horace in racing gear, 1933. Courtesy of Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, VMC2627.*



*The Detroit Yacht Club has been sponsoring the annual hydroplane races on the Detroit River since 1921. The course runs parallel to the main dock, making it the best place to watch the races. Sailboat at Detroit Yacht Club, 1940, photographer Arthur S. Siegel, Library of Congress.*



1929, Horace posted a win on paper over Gar Wood when his boat, *Miss Syndicate*, clocked the official world speed record for displacement boats at 54.71 mph. Wood's *Miss America VII* was still the world's fastest boat, but Horace was proving his worth in design. In 1932, President Hoover awarded Delphine a second President's Cup, this time for *Delphine IV*, driven by William Horn. She told the president she was building a new boat and would sure to be the pilot the following year.

When Horace finished building *Delphine VII*, his sister was traveling in Europe but rushed home when she saw photos of it battling rough waters. Newspapers reported she tested it straight away and hadn't lost her knack, but she was now undecided about piloting, saying "You know, the boats I raced before were displacement ones and these hydroplanes are different."

Bill Horn, who had won the Gold Cup and President's Cup for the family the year prior, said, "She's about the best hydroplane handler in the country." Boat enthusiasts were especially excited because *Delphine VII* was a "homemade" boat, having been built at Horace's boat factory, while the two boats he entered, *Delphine VIII* and *IX*, were built in England. Horace ended up racing for his sister, and *Delphine VII* won the Dodge

Memorial that year and the Gold Cup in 1934.

World War II brought a pause to recreational boat racing, though the innovations in the field would help the war effort. In 1942, Horace E. Dodge, Jr. was named an Army major and his boat factory was used for the war effort as he assisted a Navy engineering project. It was a shock to the Dodge family when tragedy struck on June 18, 1943, far away from the front lines of war. Delphine, just 44 years old, passed away from pneumonia. It is not clear if Delphine had ever contributed to the design of the boats her brother built for her, or if Horace, un-

encumbered by typical sibling rivalry, made sure to give her the best ones. The year previously, he had admitted his sister was "at least as good a driver as he and possibly better" and it was obvious that he regarded her at the very least as a student and partner. Rather than being intimidated by her as a woman, or not trusting her ability to judge the very real danger of boat racing, or simply being too caught up in his own goals, Horace recognized that they shared their father's need for speed...and in so doing, helped Delphine achieve unimaginable success in a man's sport.

After World War II, hydroplane and displacement boat racing resumed. Horace and his mother Anna helped sponsor the races on the Detroit River that continue through today from their beginnings in 1916. Horace Dodge, Jr. continued to build more boats, win more awards and support more young drivers and mechanics. Home films in Meadow Brook Hall's archives show that Matilda and Alfred Wilson ventured to the Detroit Yacht Club every summer to see Horace's hydroplanes race, skim and splash across the finish line. Today, his and his sister's names are synonymous with racing, particularly for those still speeding on the Detroit River. **MB**



*Top:* On August 13, 1932, Horace Dodge (second from left) and his team won the Gold Cup Trophy with *Delphine IV* at Montauk Lake, New York. *Above:* Pilot Bill Horn (left in both photos) set a new speed record of 57.7 mph as an average for the three 30-mile long heats, and shattered the previous record time by more than seven minutes. Both photos courtesy of The Mariners' Museum and Park: MS0282-01.14-04—Gold Cup Trophy; MS0282-01.14-01—*Delphine IV*.

# The cutting edge

BY KIM ZELINSKI



Collection of early 20th Century openers from top to bottom: gilded silver filigree with enamel floral on sheath; sterling silver with acorn pattern by Georg Jensen; silver with black, gold and silver embroidery on handle; sterling silver with "MRW" monogram by Leonare Doskow.



**T**here was a time not so long ago when receiving a handwritten letter was a ceremonial affair bound with a fair degree of excitement, curiosity, sometimes trepidation, and formality. The ritual would often include sitting down at one's desk, sifting through the day's mail and neatly slicing open each envelope's flap with a bladed instrument – the letter opener – which is fast becoming an obsolete tool of the past with the onset of electronic communications.

The social and business habit of exchanging notes, letters and business correspondence occupied a significant portion of the day for Matilda and Alfred Wilson. Socially, for them and their peers, elegant handwriting was an expression of refinement and education. Likewise, some of the letter openers they used were symbolic of social status, produced by elite creators such as Tiffany Studios and Sheffield Silver Company, and artisans Georg Jensen and Carl Fabergé.

Regardless of social status, letter openers were stylized tools considered part of an average desk set kept alongside writing pens, inkwells, paperweights and desk seals. They were, and still are, made from a variety of materials; typically bronze, brass, silver, wood or ivory. Their designs could be simple and practical, or artistic and ornate, resembling anything from the heads of historical figures to the hilts of swords.



*Top: collection of ivory and bone openers and paper knives, late 19th Century. Left: smallest letter opener in the MBH collection (two inches), gold with lily motif, "MRD" monogram, circa 1916. Above left: (Napoleon) mother of pearl with bronze Napoleon Bonaparte figure; Above right: (Dragon) mother of pearl with bronze dragon handle, early 20th Century.*



Evolving from the pen knife developed in the Middle Ages and the paper knife developed in the 18th Century, the letter opener became popular after envelopes began being mass produced in the mid-19th Century. While the letter opener and paper knife are often confused with each other, each had its own purpose. The paper knife was prevalent during the Victorian Age when bookbinding practices and newspaper printing often left pages uncut. They were commonly made from wood, ivory, mother of pearl or silver; materials that had the ability to be made smooth and thin yet strong and sharp enough to slit paper. The key physical difference: paper-knives were shorter and sharper and letter openers were longer and duller.

The vast majority of the early 20th-century letter openers in the marketplace were silver plated or sterling silver and were often embellished with jade, ivory or tortoiseshell to enhance the silver mounting. Some were designed to serve double-duty whereupon their ends could sport a magnifying glass, ballpoint pen or ruler; others had ends that were made with animal parts such as horns and feet.



*Top: jade with rose enamel attributed to Fabrege', circa 1920. Middle: brass with champleve enamel by Ferdinand Barbedienne, circa 1890. Bottom: gold with jade carved handle, circa 1920.*



For those who could afford them, Tiffany studios offered complete desk accessories and items that appealed to businessmen and women. For those who could not, letter openers made of wood or those found at their favorite tourist site were affordable options.

By the turn of the century, letter openers were being manufactured in mass quantities as advertising tools for companies who would imprint their logos or messages on the handles and distribute them as gifts to customers.



*From top: tortoise shell with banded pen handle, circa 1920; tortoise shell paper knife, circa 1890; tortoise shell with tiger engraved silver inset<sup>3</sup> silver with fish catching a fly engraving by Cartier, circa 1930; ivory with mother of pearl inlay, circa 1900.*



*Top left, from left to right: wood, male figure, München, Germany, circa 1910; wood, from the timbers of Winchester Cathedral, England, circa 1900; wood, Ste Anne De Beaupre Que., Canada, circa 1900; wood, Reichenbach Fall, Germany, circa 1910. Right, brass, engraved "John F. Dodge" gift from Hydraulic, Detroit, circa 1910; brass, engraved "John F. Dodge", gift from Detroit Nut Company, Detroit, circa 1910.*

*Bottom: bronze paper knife with water buffalo horn handle, Siam, Thailand, late 19th Century.*



Meadow Brook Hall's diverse collection features both paper knives and letter openers that were either purchased by the Dodge and Wilson families, collected as mementos from their worldly travels or acquired as gifts from family and friends. Examples from the 87 total range from the smallest gold lily piece at only two inches long to an exotic jeweled machete-looking blade that served more as a conversation piece than functional. No doubt, within their collection of letter openers, Matilda and Alfred Wilson had a favorite or two that adorned their desks. Be sure to search out the pictured items and others on your next visit to The Hall.



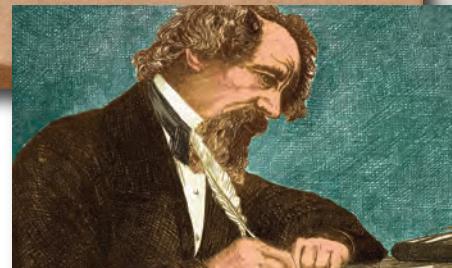
## Short cuts

Letter openers have touched world cultures in various ways. Here are a few interesting stories:

**WHEN CHARLES DICKENS'** deaf kitten, "Bob," passed away, Dickens, who was fascinated by taxidermy, preserved part of him – a paw which the author had stuffed and attached to an ivory blade. The blade is engraved "C.D. In Memory of Bob 1862."



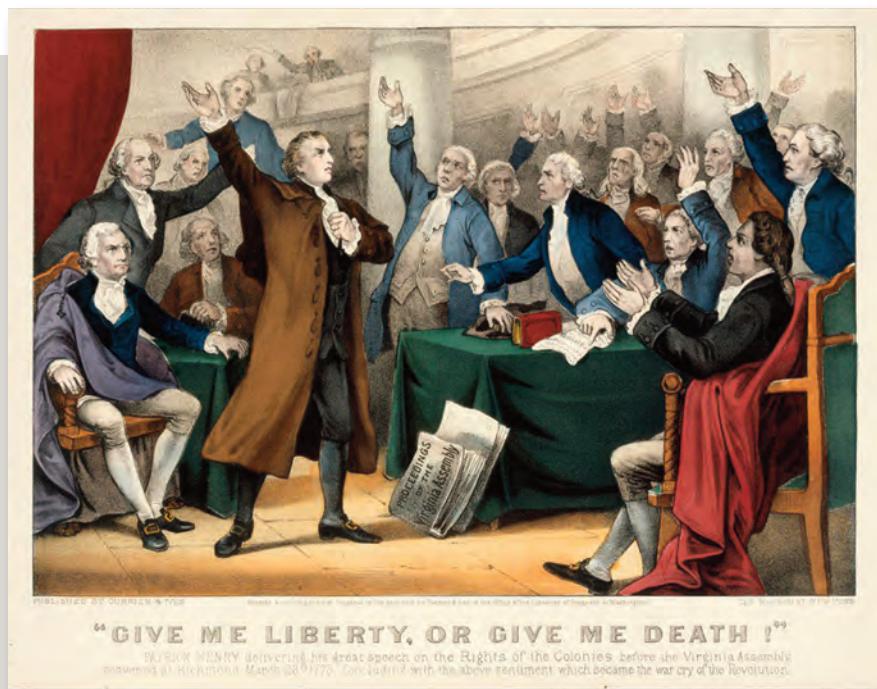
**AMERICAN POLITICIAN PATRICK HENRY** is famous for making a speech before the Virginia House of Burgesses on March 23, 1775, stating the famous words "Give me Liberty, or give me Death!" After his utterance, he pretended to plunge a letter opener into his chest.



**A TALE WAS TOLD AROUND THE WORLD** of the Rajah Holkar of India who in 1981 repaid a small debt to Marquis of Lansdowne, the Viceroy of Calcutta. During a subsequent visit, the Rajah observed Lord Lansdowne using an ivory paper cutter, something he had never seen and admired greatly. The Rajah asked "If your Excellency will make a present of it, I will send you another in exchange."

Lansdowne bestowed the gift and sometime later he received notice that the Rajah's return gift was on its way, a young and handsome elephant whose tusks had been skillfully carved into the shape of a paper cutter. A servant brought over some papers and demonstrated how the elephant could precisely cut the leaves with its sharply trimmed tusks. Apparently, the "living paper cutter" remained in Lansdowne's possession, but for his customary opening of books, he used a less bulky implement.

**THE LARGEST COLLECTION** of letter openers belongs to Santa Fe College Foundation (USA), in Gainesville, Florida. **MB**



# I Dig It *with Shaina Browning*



**S**haina Browning is Meadow Brook Hall's resident housekeeper, tasked with cleaning all of the priceless artifacts and countless collection items housed in The Hall. While she's not working at Meadow Brook, Browning is an anthropology major at Oakland University, studying to be an archeologist.

This summer, she spent an incredible three weeks in Israel, where she worked with a team of archeologists uncovering the lost city of Ziklag, a pre-Biblical site associated with King David. She recently sat down with MEADOW BROOK MAGAZINE on a breezy summer day to recount her adventures, her passion for history and how it all ties into her work at The Hall. —FB



**MEADOW BROOK MAGAZINE:**

What got you interested in pursuing archeology?

**Browning:** That's a long story! To shorten it, it's always something I've done with my mom. She always had documentaries about ancient Egypt on [the TV], watching them uncover the tombs and learning about the gods. I also remember going up to Mackinac Island as a kid, and there was an archeology dig. I remember sitting cross-legged by the dig, just completely in awe. My mom had to drag me away! When I grew up, I wanted to go into history, but eventually, I had to stop and think about what history was. It wasn't what

I wanted. History is all about events and military, but I want to know about the people. I was researching it one summer when I realized there was something focused on people: it was called anthropology, and the people digging are the archeologists. So the next semester I switched from history to anthropology.

**MBM:** Congratulations! What dream job would you love to get after graduating?

**Browning:** I would honestly love to still dig, which sounds weird. A lot of people say, "It must be so cool to look at the artifacts," but I just really like digging! So if I could, I would move somewhere in the mountains like Montana or Colorado, somewhere where there are a lot of Native American artifacts, and do digs there. I think that would be the best job. But realistically, I like what Madelyn [Rzadkowolski, Meadow Brook's

*curator*] does here in the curatorial department. I just want to deal with the artifacts and research what people did with them. In Israel, there was a lot of pottery and there are different types of pottery. It was so cool to be able touch that pottery, knowing that someone used this to cook and there's still char marks on it from when they set it in the fire. If I could do anything with objects and researching what people did with those objects, that would be cool. I think I'll end up in a museum. I'd still like to dig, though.

**MBM:** Switching gears to your work here, can you describe what you are engaged in at The Hall?

**Browning:** I am the housekeeper, so that means cleaning, dusting, mopping and vacuuming. I make sure that the artifacts on display – which aren't supposed to be touched, but might get touched – get cleaned properly.

**MBM:** That must be a little intimidating, knowing how meticulous Matilda [Wilson] was about keeping her household...

**Browning:** [laughing] Kind of! Especially when I go into her bedroom, and I get the feeling I have to get everything right. This house has a reputation from 90 years ago, when she was here with her whole staff, and now it's just me cleaning. Hopefully everything is as good as she wanted it! It's a lot of pressure, but I love this house.

**MBM:** You mentioned that you wake up really early, and start work around 4 in the morning! Does that feel strange?

**Browning:** It was at first. I've been



here for about 4 years. I did feel like a stranger in The Hall. Now I feel like it's my house, especially after I've cleaned it on my hands and knees!

**MBM:** What drew you to working at The Hall? Does it relate to your studies?

**Browning:** I wanted something close to Oakland University, and since I was still a history major, I started looking for work in museums. I found a housekeeper position at Meadow Brook Hall and I thought "oh, that sounds cool." I had no idea about Meadow Brook Hall and its connections to OU. I felt like it was a good stepping stone for me, especially for knowing how to deal with old materials, and how to clean them. It felt like the perfect scenario for me. Now I

don't know how I'm going to leave when I graduate!

**MBM:** What is your favorite part about working here?

**Browning:** I love having to sneak around everywhere to clean! Walking the secret staircase for the first time was amazing. I really like that I'm learning different ways to clean old materials to preserve them. I think my absolute favorite thing, though, is being here when no one else is here. Walking around at 4:30 in the morning is incredibly atmospheric. You're taking care of this house that means so much to the community and the school. I feel like I'm taking care of something precious when I'm cleaning alone. It's something about this house. You just feel at home. **MB**

# *Richard Wilson celebrates 90 years young*

Meadow Brook Hall celebrated another milestone at the end of June when Richard Wilson, son of Alfred and Matilda Wilson, celebrated his 90th birthday over a weekend of activities.

Members from both the Wilson and Dodge families traveled from afar to honor this special occasion, which kicked off on Saturday, June 28th with a private showing

of family film clips featuring Richard as he grew up on the Meadow Brook estate. The gathering ended with a surprise that was secretly parked in the Front Courtyard, a 1949 Dodge Wayfarer convertible that was very similar in color and style to the one Richard received as a Culver Military Academy graduation present from his parents in 1947.

Richard was treated to a chauffeur-driven cruise around the estate, eventually arriving at Dan's Cabin where some 200 guests gathered to cele-



brate yet another surprise; the unveiling and dedication of his and his sister Barbara Wilson's restored childhood playhouse (*above*).

Several months earlier, The Hall moved the Wilson playhouse from the golf course to a site between Dan Dodge's Cabin and Knole Cottage (Frances Dodge's playhouse).

The Wilson Playhouse was dedicated to Richard and his wife, Jane, who passed away last year. Donations from family members, including Larry and Debbie Wilson and John and Julie Van Lennep, along with Meadow Brook Hall friends and supporters Ann and Jim Nicholson, helped fund the move and restoration work.

That work included exterior painting, refinishing the interior wood paneled walls, electrical upgrades, replication of the original child-sized benches that flank the entrance door and the creation of interpretive signage. **MB**



*From left: son Larry Wilson, Richard and nephew John Van Lennep with the 1949 Dodge.*

# *Weddings*

## AT THE GREAT ESTATE



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